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On a Full-fledged Monk Who Kept Precepts, Practiced Austerities, and Attained a Miraculous Power in This Life¹

In the reign of Empress Jitō, there was a *dhyāna* master of Paekche whose name was Tajō 多常.² He lived a life of strict discipline in Hōki-yamadera 法器山寺³ in Takechi district and made it his chief concern to cure diseases.⁴ The dying were restored to health by his miraculous works. Whenever he recited formulas for the sick, there was a miraculous event. Once he climbed a tree to get a willow twig,⁵ using a monk's stick⁶ with another on top of it as a ladder. The two sticks did not fall, but stood as if they had been grafted together. The empress respected him and made offerings to him, and the people put faith in him and revered him. This is the fruit of his disciplined life.⁷ His fame and compassionate virtue will be praised forever.

1. The motif of a stick growing into a tree or a Buddhist monk causing water to spring out of the ground by striking it with a stick is found throughout Japan. The Buddhist tradition gives an anecdote of Śākyamuni: After Buddha chewed on a stick, he stuck it in the ground, and it grew into a tree seven feet high. See *Fa-hsien chuan* 法顯傳 (*Taishō*, LI, No. 2085, 860b); James Legge, trans., *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*, 54–55, text 17; Hsüan-tsang 玄奘, *Ta-i'ang hsi-yü-chi* 大唐西域記, IV (*Taishō*, LI, No. 2087); Watters, trans., *On Yuan Chuang's Travels in India*, I, 129.

2. Or Tarajō 多羅常; unknown.

3. Identified with Hokonoki-dera 棒削寺 (later Kojima-dera 子島寺), or Minami-hokke-ji 南法華寺 in Takechi district. See Fukuyama, *Narachō jūin*, 230–234.

4. 看病第一.

5. 楊枝 *yōshi*; Indian monks chewed a piece of a banyan tree to clean their teeth every morning (Skt. *dantakāṣṭha*). The Chinese, not having a banyan tree, substituted a twig from a willow tree to protect them from evil.

6. 錫杖 *shakujō*, the stick with a metal ring on the top used by ascetics and monks.

7. 修行 *shugyō*, self-discipline oriented toward enlightenment, cultivation of the mind by means of disciplining the body. Cf. *Bukkyō ni okeru gyō no mondai*, ed. by Nihon Bukkyō gakkai.